

II. Setting the Context for the Workshop

1. *The Chesapeake Bay community of Ewell on Smith Island. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network is a partnership system of parks, refuges, museums, historic communities, and water trails—each telling part of the Bay story. Together, these Gateways provide a way for understanding the Bay as a whole. The NPS provides technical and financial assistance to locally initiated projects that help convey the Bay’s diverse stories. Photo courtesy of Maryland Office of Tourism Development.*

2. *The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor has put significant effort into signage, which has helped heighten awareness of the sites and the region’s history. Photo courtesy of Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor.*

3. *The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, a nonprofit excursion railroad that operates in partnership with the NPS in Ohio’s Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Established in 1975, the park preserves rural landscapes along the Cuyahoga River between Cleveland and Akron. Photo by Sandra Gillard.*

4. *Walking the Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail. Established in 1983, the 700-mile trail generally follows the track used by American Indians and early settlers as the shortest route between the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers. NPS photo.*

5. *Hauling logs from horse-drawn skid to portable sawmill as part of an educational demonstration on sustainable forest practices for woodland owners in Vermont. The 1995 demonstration was a collaborative project of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Billings Farm & Museum, U.S. Forest Service, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and Vermont Woodland Resources Association. Photo by Nora Mitchell.*

6. *A 1993 photo of the John Parker home in Ripley, Ohio, on the Ohio River. John Parker (1827-1900) was born into slavery in Virginia. After an escape attempt, Parker was sold to another owner in Alabama, where he eventually purchased his freedom in 1845. Four years later he moved his family to Ohio, where he assisted hundreds of runaways to freedom in the Ohio Underground Railroad. Photo by Barbara Tagger.*

7. *The John Parker Home in 1999, following designation as a National Historic Landmark and restoration through the efforts of the Ripley-based John Parker Historical Society. The Parker Home will serve as a museum and interpretive center on the Underground Railroad. Photo by Barbara Tagger.*

8. *Students learn about water quality while conducting sampling of White Clay Creek in Delaware. White Clay Creek, designated a National Wild and Scenic River in 2000, is managed in partnership with state, county, and local governments and private organizations. Photo courtesy of Delaware Nature Society.*



Over the past 20 years, Congress has established an increasing number of conservation areas that depend upon long-term collaboration between partner organizations and the National Park Service (NPS). Areas managed through innovative partnerships include certain national parks, national long distance trails, wild and scenic rivers, and, more recently, national heritage areas. These areas, which create opportunities for shared investment and management among public and private organizations, represent new approaches that draw on traditions within the NPS, yet extend the agency beyond its traditions.

As Congress, responding to increased public interest, has created more partnership areas, it has raised new challenges for the NPS and its partners, such as:

- How can the NPS more successfully forge long-term partnerships with local organizations and communities to plan and manage these areas?
- How can the agency and its partners build professional capacity to deal with management decisions posed by these areas?
- How can the NPS expand beyond its traditional approach of direct management control to incorporate approaches that encourage collaborative, community-based conservation?

With a wide diversity in the specific arrangements for cooperative planning and management, there is no one “partnership model.” The arrangements vary with the place and its natural and cultural resources and recreational opportunities, as well as the array of organizations and institutions involved and the nature of land ownership. In each case, however, the partnership structure encourages diverse organizations to work together, and building lasting relationships among the partners is fundamental to the conservation effort.

Two Examples of Recently Designated Partnership Parks

- ☞ New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (Massachusetts) was established in 1996 to commemorate whaling as part of American history. The park encompasses 34 acres and 70 buildings, about one-third of New Bedford's downtown. Federal property ownership within the park is limited, and the NPS relies on partnerships with state and municipal agencies, as well as nonprofit institutions, to carry out its mission. The park also has a distant partner. To recognize the contributions of Alaska Natives in

the history of whaling, the park is legislatively linked to the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, Alaska, making New Bedford National Historical Park the first bicoastal unit of the National Park System.

- ☞ The New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park (Louisiana), established in 1994, is dedicated to the preservation and celebration of jazz, our nation's best-known indigenous art form. The park is structured around a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the City of New Orleans; other partners include the New Orleans Jazz Commission and the city's many neighborhood jazz clubs. The "park" encompasses a living cultural tradition that is woven into the fabric of New Orleans, and the story of jazz will be conveyed at various locations throughout the city, allowing visitors to experience the sights, sounds, and places where jazz evolved. The role of the NPS is to educate and interpret the evolution of jazz, and to cooperate in perpetuating an art form rather than managing land or buildings. A visitor facility with performance venues and an education center will be located in buildings leased in the city's Armstrong Park.



Gene Hyden

A. Historical Perspective

Although partnerships have been used to successfully conserve important resource areas for a number of years, the evolution of a partnership model gained momentum with the establishment of Lowell National Historical Park in 1978. In a presentation on the first day of the workshop, Rolf Diamant, Superintendent of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, noted that following on the success of the Lowell partnerships, support grew in Congress to pursue parks based on collaborations with other public and private parties. Congressional interest was also heightened with the increasing desire of communities across the country to draw upon the services and resources of the NPS. As a result, in the 1980s and 1990s, many new units of the National Park System were established with a variety of nontraditional formulas (see box at left for two examples of partnership parks). Diamant also noted that Lowell National Historical Park, "... with its successful formula of mixing public/private investments in downtown heritage preservation with NPS expertise in visitor services and interpretive facilities, in turn inspired the first generation of national heritage areas." In heritage areas, federal, state, and local governments and private interests join together to provide for preservation, interpretation, recreation, and other activities. Each national heritage area tells the stories of its residents, past and present, celebrating cultural and natural heritage and preserving special landscapes. The NPS is often a catalyst among the partners, providing technical assistance as well as financial assistance for a limited number of years following designation.

This history of the last two decades depicts an evolving conservation model that includes new roles for the NPS and a wide array of partners. (For an overview of the many different designations for which the NPS now has responsibility, see page 5.) As the partnership models continue to evolve, the concept of a nationwide system of parks and conservation areas is becoming more clear. This concept provides an inclusive national framework for conservation that encompasses wilderness areas as well as places close to where people live and work. The distinction between "a national system of parks" and the National Park System was first noted by Stephen T. Mather, the founding director of the National Park System, according to Paul Pritchard in a recent *George Wright Forum* article on state parks. Pritchard also uses the term "national system of parks and conservation areas." (See Further Reading.)

Current Definitions from the Index of the National Park Service

The *National Parks: Index 1999-2001*, the "Official Index of the National Park Service," lists the Congressionally designated properties for which the NPS has responsibilities. The Index describes the National Park System and the various designations it encompasses. Besides the National Park System, **four other categories** of nationally important areas exist: National Heritage Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Trails, and Affiliated Areas. These areas, almost all Congressionally designated, are closely linked in importance and purpose to the national park areas managed by the NPS. Although most are not currently defined as units of the National Park System, these related areas conserve important segments of the nation's heritage. Many are managed through partners working in cooperation with the NPS.

- ☞ The **National Park System** has been defined as comprising those areas owned and managed by the NPS. The designations for units include: National Parks, National Monuments, National Lakeshores, National Seashores, National Rivers and Wild and Scenic Riverways,* National Scenic Trails,* National Historic Sites, National Historical Parks, National Recreation Areas, National Preserves, National Reserves, National Memorials, National Parkways, and four designations for areas associated with United States military history.

- ☞ **National Heritage Areas** include entire communities or regions in which residents, businesses, and local governments have come together to conserve special landscapes and their own heritage. Conservation, interpretation, and other activities are managed by a designated local management entity through partnerships among federal, state, and local governments and private nonprofit organizations.

The NPS does not acquire new land in these areas, but provides technical and financial assistance for a limited period.

- ☞ Rivers within the **National Wild and Scenic Rivers System** are classified as wild, scenic, or recreational according to the degree of development, and may include only a segment of a river. The system includes rivers designated by Congress and also by the Secretary of Interior (provided they have been protected first at the state level). While some designated rivers are managed directly by the NPS, thus are units of the National Park System, a growing number are administered through partnership arrangements between the NPS and other entities.
- ☞ The **National Trails System** includes national scenic trails, national historic trails, national recreation trails, and side and connecting trails. Since the National Trails System Act of 1968, 22 national scenic trails and national historic trails (collectively referred to as long distance trails) have been designated. The NPS administers 17 of them, one jointly with the Bureau of Land Management. The federal government has also recognized 800 national recreation trails totaling 9,000 miles in length. Of these, 525 are on federal lands, 151 are state trails, 85 are local, 31 are on private lands, and 12 are managed by two or more entities.
- ☞ **Affiliated Areas** include a variety of significant properties with high historic or scientific value. These areas, Congressionally designated, are eligible for NPS technical and financial assistance but are neither federally owned nor administered by the NPS.

*Note, however, that not all designated rivers or trails are units of the National Park System



A Working Vocabulary for NPS Partnerships

For the NPS and its partners, the term “partnership” has several definitions:

Within national parks, **partnerships** are increasingly important in carrying out basic missions and mandates. Many national park managers have initiated collaboration with neighboring communities and local organizations to create better communication and to work on issues of mutual interest, such as visitor traffic and adjacent land development. Participants in two 1996 seminars on national parks and gateway communities, organized by the Sonoran Institute for the NPS Park Planning and Special Studies Program, commented that all national parks are partnership areas and that “park managers should view partnerships as an important management tool in protecting park resources.” (See report, *National Parks and their Neighbors*, in Further Reading.) Overall, partners in the national parks include neighboring communities, volunteers, friends groups, cooperating associations, concession operators, as well as corporations, foundations, and others who help support park operations.

- The legislation for certain national parks specifies one or more partners to work with the NPS in planning and managing the designated area. These can be called “**partnership parks**.” Partners may include state and other federal agencies, local governments, and local business or nonprofit organizations.
- Certain Congressionally authorized areas, such as national heritage areas and some wild and scenic rivers and long distance trails, are managed by other entities through partnerships with the NPS. In these cases, which can be termed “**partnership areas**,” the NPS provides technical and financial assistance to the local managing organization(s).
- The term “**partnership programs**” refers to programs that the NPS administers outside of its role as a land manager. These programs operate from the NPS regional offices and provide technical and financial assistance to states, local governments, and the private sector for such activities as historic preservation, river and trail conservation, urban parks, and recreation.

B. National and International Context

The rise in designations of NPS partnership areas reflects broader concurrent shifts taking place in conservation. In the United States, the last 15 years have seen a dramatic increase in community-based conservation, evidenced by the growth of local organizations such as land trusts, watershed groups, and historic preservation initiatives. In remarks at the workshop based on a recent research project on stewardship, Jacquelyn Tuxill, workshop coordinator for QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, noted that locally based conservation often builds on a strong sense of place and a concern for landscape integrity that includes both cultural and natural heritage. Many community-based initiatives pursue collaboration among diverse interests, weaving together economic, social, ecological, and cultural objectives. (See *The Landscape of Conservation Stewardship* in Further Reading.)

At the workshop, Jessica Brown, Vice President for International Programs for QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, noted that these trends in parks and protected area management and community-based conservation in the U.S. are paralleled globally. Worldwide, there is growing recognition that protected areas can no longer be treated as islands but must be seen in the context of overall land use, and that successful managers are adopting more inclusive, collaborative approaches in working closely with local communities. Over the last two decades, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have grown dramatically and now play a major role in conservation. As conservation strategies become increasingly bioregional in scope, yet must also demonstrate benefits at the local level, there is a trend in many countries toward partnerships among public agencies, NGOs, and diverse stakeholders. (See *Landscape Stewardship: New Directions in Conservation of Nature and Culture*, special issue of *George Wright Forum*, Vol. 17, No. 1, in Further Reading.)

C. Defining Partnership Parks and Areas: The challenge of terminology

As Congressional designations of nationally significant areas have diversified and brought partners into planning and managing, these new designations no longer fit neatly into the traditional National Park System definitions. Consequently, these new areas have been placed into other categories, called “related areas,” which seem to imply lesser value and a lack of connectedness to the more traditional national parks under the purview of the NPS. Agency nomenclature can be confusing, for those inside as well as outside the NPS (e.g., the Appalachian Trail, a national scenic trail and part of the National Trails System, is also a unit of the National Park System). This report uses as its working vocabulary the terms “partnership parks” and “partnership areas.” As defined on page 6, these two terms indicate places where the NPS is working in a long-term relationship with other organizations for conservation of Congressionally designated areas.

In addition, the growth of collaboration and the diversity of the conservation model have resulted in widespread use of such terms as “partnership,” “empower,” or “work inclusively.” The workshop participants struggled to find terminology that captures the insights they have gained about partnerships that are intended to last in perpetuity. They acknowledged the need for words that go beyond the commonly used rhetoric that can convey the necessary skills, the commitment, and the rewards of working in long-term partnerships for conservation. They did consider and reject certain terms—for example, using “non-traditional” to describe the more recent national parks and other designated areas involving partnerships—agreeing instead to continue the search while, through this report, putting this challenge before a broader audience.

Through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service, the nonprofit Appalachian Trail Conference monitors and maintains the Appalachian National Scenic Trail through its network of member organizations. Volunteer hours in 2000 totaled 201,466 hours, contributed by 4,629 volunteers. Valued at \$14 per hour, this represents \$2.8 million in donated services. Photo by John Wright, Appalachian Trail Conference.

